

SITE NAME: River Oaks Community Shopping Center  
SITE LOCATION: 1952 - 2050 W. Gray Street

**AGENDA ITEM: Ia**  
**HPO File No. 101004**

**Owner:** Weingarten Realty Investors

**Applicant:** Same

Time Frame	Date Accepted	90-day Waiver
	Oct-06-2010	Jan-03-2011

**SITE INFORMATION:** TR 9 ABST 696 O SMITH, TR 3 ABST 696 O SMITH, TR 10 (IMPS ONLY) (LAND\*0442250000001) ABST 696 O SMITH, TR 2 (IMPS ONLY) (LAND\*0442250000168) ABST 696 O SMITH, TR 2 (IMPS ONLY)(LAND\*0442250000168)ABST 696 O SMITH , TR 10 ABST 696 O SMITH , TR 16 ABST 696 O SMITH , TR 17 ABST 696 O SMITH , TR 2 ABST 696 O SMITH , TR 1 ABST 696 O SMITH , ABST 696 O SMITH TRS 4 5 & 21 (IMPS ONLY) (LAND\*0442250000002) ABST 696 O SMITH, (AKA 1952-2047 West Gray) Houston, Harris County, Texas. The buildings on the site are a combination of one and two-story, stucco clad commercial spaces.

**TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED:** The applicant requests approval of a certificate of appropriateness for the following work:

- Remodel the River Oaks community Shopping Center; The work to be performed will occur in zones 3, 4, 5, and 6 which includes the buildings at 1952 -1956 and 1953-2047 West Gray on the North and South side of street; The scope of work excludes the River Oaks Theatre building located at 2009 West Gray Street;
- On all buildings previously described, except for the River Oaks Theatre, the applicant proposes to increase the overall height of the existing roof parapet by 3'-0" to allow for new larger business signage and to hide roof top mechanical equipment; New signage will be standardized throughout the center and will be affixed directly to the exterior surface of the roof parapet wall above the existing canopy instead of to the existing black canvas band, which is a later alteration; Added height to parapet will be achieved by affixing new stucco clad panels to the exterior surface of the existing parapet wall; On selected individual River Oaks Shopping Center buildings construct round corner turrets to match the one previously installed at the southwest corner of the building located on the north side of the 1900 block of West Gray between Driscoll and McDuffie Streets; Turrets will be approximately two feet higher than proposed parapet and will be capped by a truncated conical detail which will be composed of perforated metal (Please see individual building descriptions for locations); New signage above each tenant location will feature a uniform color and will be either internally illuminated individually mounted channel letters or externally illuminated individually flush mounted vinyl letters;
- Building One located on the North side of W. Gray between Driscoll and McDuffie Streets(aka Zone Three on attached map):Install one new corner turret at the southwest rounded corner of the building; Raise the existing roof parapet height by 3'-0" to accept new larger business signage; In central two story section of the building install new decorative pierced metal grilles over the existing second story window bays; Wrap existing first floor columns with anodized aluminum covers; Please see attached elevation for details;
- Building Two Located on the South side of W. Gray between Driscoll and McDuffie Street (aka Zone Four on attached map): Raise the existing roof parapet height by 3'-0" to accept new larger business signage; In central two story section of the building install new decorative pierced metal grilles over existing second story window bays; Wrap existing first floor columns with anodized aluminum covers; Please see attached elevation for details; At north elevation of L shaped wing located at the east end of the building install flat stone panels around the main entrance;

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- Building Three (excluding River Oaks Theatre) Located on the South side of W. Gray between South Shepherd Drive and McDuffie Street (aka Zone Five on attached map): Install one new corner turret at the northwest rounded corner of the building; Raise the existing roof parapet height by 3'-0" to accept new larger business signage; Please see attached elevation for details;
- Building Four Which is the semicircular Building Located on the South side of W. Gray between South Shepherd Drive and McDuffie Street (aka Zone Six on attached map): Raise the existing roof parapet height by 3'-0" to accept new larger business signage; At the north elevation of the two story portion of the building, install sandstone pilasters which will wrap the buildings corners from grade to the top of the new raised parapet; Install a ribbed anodized aluminum strip along the edge of the existing canopy which shelters the main entry; Please see attached elevation for details;

**HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE:**

The River Oaks Community Shopping Center and River Oaks Theatre was determined by the Texas Historical Commission, on September 5, 2006, as eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. On August 8, 2007 City Council designated the River Oaks Community Shopping Center and River Oaks Theatre as a Landmark of the City of Houston.

According to Houston Architectural Survey 1980, the River Oaks Community Shopping Center was constructed between 1936 and 1937 from a design by Stayton Nunn - Milton G. McGinty, architects, with Oliver C. Winston, as consulting architect. "Designed to provide convenient shopping for the new subdivision of River Oaks, this 'community center' is a fine example of suburban commercial architecture with the attributes of small scale, accessibility by automobile, and dramatic modern architecture." The center was originally constructed by the River Oaks Corporation, which was financed by Will C. Hogg and Mike Hogg, with Hugh Potter acting as its President. The venture flourished and in 1935-36, Potter bought out the Hogg's interest and embarked on a building campaign on sites adjacent to River Oaks proper, where deed restrictions precluded the construction of commercial or multi-family dwellings, other than adjacent to the exclusive River Oaks neighborhood. The River Oaks Community Shopping Center was the brainchild of Hugh Potter, being a part of this \$1 million effort to provide convenience and commerce, for shopping for River Oaks, as it does even to this day for all Houstonians. The original two buildings were incorporated into a larger complex covering approximately eight blocks which expanded the shopping complex eastward toward downtown Houston.

The original center at W. Gray and S. Shepherd, consists of two, identical crescent-shaped, one-story masonry, stucco clad commercial blocks, one on the north side and another on the south side of W. Gray. Each of the two commercial blocks terminates into a two-story, commercial block on the eastern edges, again, one located on the north side and another located on the side south side of W. Gray. This symmetrical placement of these two crescent shaped buildings, is what one first sees while leaving the upscale, River Oaks neighborhood on W. Gray, or turning onto W. Gray from S. Shepherd. The center was initially and uniquely designed to allow drivers to see all storefronts in either half of the center. The exceptional design and quality of the development was the subject of an extensive article in Architectural Record in June 1940. Another innovative approach for the center was the introduction, by the architects, of a backlit, cavetto canopy to Houston. The buildings are not only significant examples of modern, Art Deco architecture, but they are also closely associated with and linked directly to the importance and prominence of the River Oaks Corporation, and its innovative development, River Oaks. Moreover, the Center is significant as Houston's first auto-centered, suburban shopping center, and one of the first such developments in the country (Cite Magazine).

The center has experienced several sympathetic remodeling periods in the past, including one in 1974 (Clovis Heimsath, architect) and another in 1978 (S. I. Morris Associates, architects), both of whom reversed unsympathetic alterations in their restorations. More recently, Weingarten Realty has continued that legacy with the completion of several modern, yet compatible new construction projects, both on and adjacent to the historic site, including Starbuck's Coffee at 2050 W. Gray, Bank One at 2049 W. Gray, and the Kroger Shopping Center further east. Not only were these modern, auxiliary buildings constructed to harmonize in scale, context and appearance with the historic River Oaks Community Shopping Center, but more importantly, the historic Center was not altered in any way during those projects. In fact Weingarten's past actions have done nothing but to acknowledge the center's original architectural elements as significant, and by respecting the Center's architectural and historical importance as originally constructed, have strived to create a real "sense of place: for the entire shopping area, a rare but desired trait to be found anywhere else in Houston.

**APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR ALTERATION:**

**Sec. 33-241. Same-Alteration, rehabilitation, restoration, and construction.**

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(a) The HAHC shall issue a certificate of appropriateness for the alteration, rehabilitation, restoration, or construction of an exterior feature of (I) any landmark, (II) any building, structure, or object in an historic district, or (III) any building, Structure, or object that is part of an archaeological site, upon finding that the application satisfies the following criteria, as applicable:

S D NA S - satisfies D - does not satisfy NA - not applicable

- (1) The proposed activity must retain and preserve the historical character of the property; The River Oaks Community Shopping Center was designed and constructed in the Art Deco style beginning in 1936. The design for the Historic buildings relies heavily on its low planar massing. The proposed activity will raise the visual height of the low profile buildings and will place emphasis on elements which were never part of the original design.
(2) The proposed activity must contribute to the continued availability of the property for a contemporary use;
(3) The proposed activity must recognize the building, structure, object or site as a product of its own time and avoid alterations that seek to create an earlier or later appearance;
(4) The proposed activity must preserve the distinguishing qualities or character of the building, structure, object or site and its environment; The proposed alteration seeks to add architectural embellishments to a building which never historically exhibited such characteristics.
(5) The proposed activity must maintain or replicate distinctive stylistic exterior features or examples of skilled craftsmanship that characterize the building, structure, object or site;
(6) New materials to be used for any exterior feature must be compatible with the materials being replaced in composition, design, texture and other visual qualities; The use of sandstone in the proposed design is not an original exterior treatment of the building.
(7) The proposed replacement of missing exterior features, if any, should be based on an accurate duplication of features, substantiated by available historical, physical or pictorial evidence, where that evidence is available, rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different architectural elements from other structures;
(8) Proposed additions or alterations must be done in a manner that, if removed in the future, would leave unimpaired the essential form and integrity of the building, structure, object or site;
(9) The proposed design for alterations or construction must not destroy significant historical, architectural or cultural material and must be compatible with the size, scale, material and character of the property and the area in which it is located; While the proposed activities will obscure historic details it is unclear whether or not those materials will be destroyed. However, the proposed alterations will be out of scale with the original building as they seek to add height to the original low streamlined design for the center. Additionally, the use of the corner turrets is more indicative of the art moderne style rather than the more angular art deco style.
(10) The setback of any proposed construction or alteration must be compatible with existing setbacks along the blockface and facing blockface(s); and
(11) The proposed activity will comply with any applicable deed restrictions.

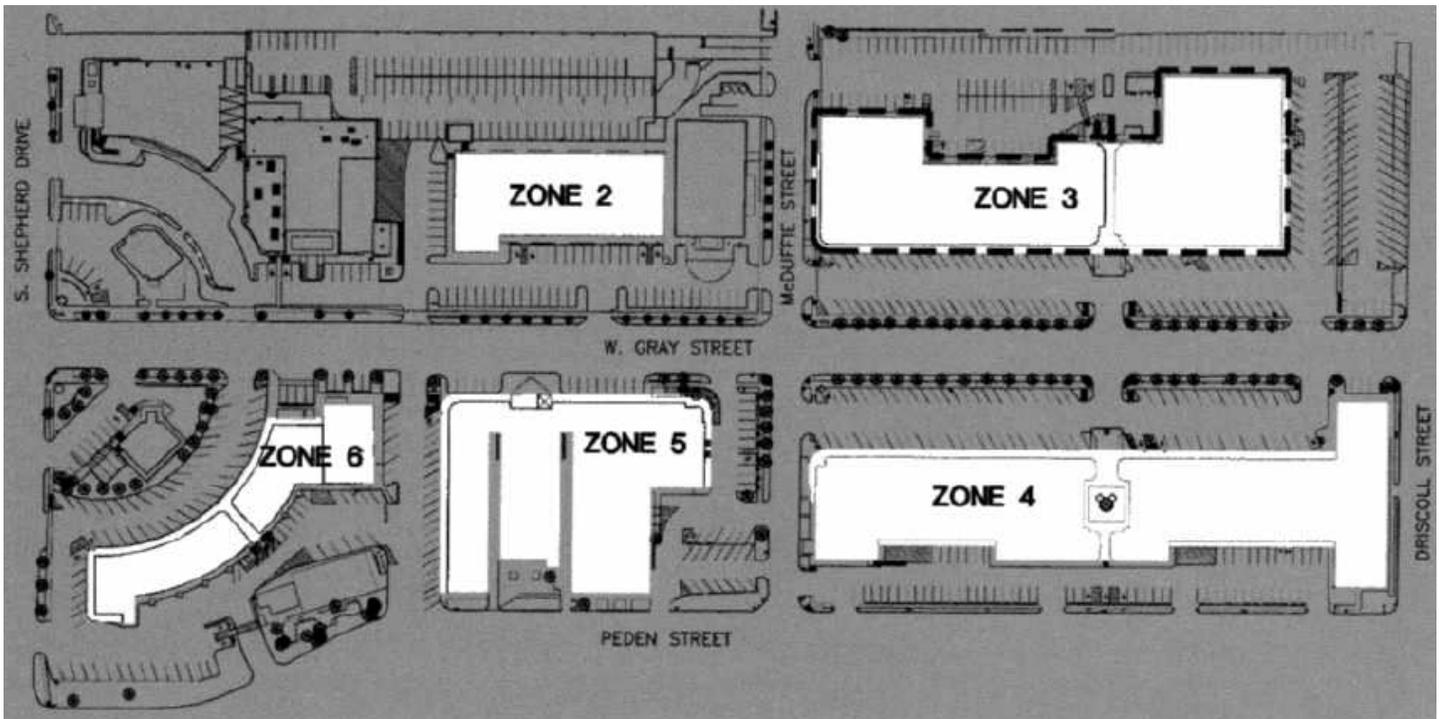
STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Denial of the certificate of appropriateness as requested by the applicant.

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**Site Location Maps  
Showing Buildings by Zone  
(Zone 2 not part of application)  
Not to Scale**

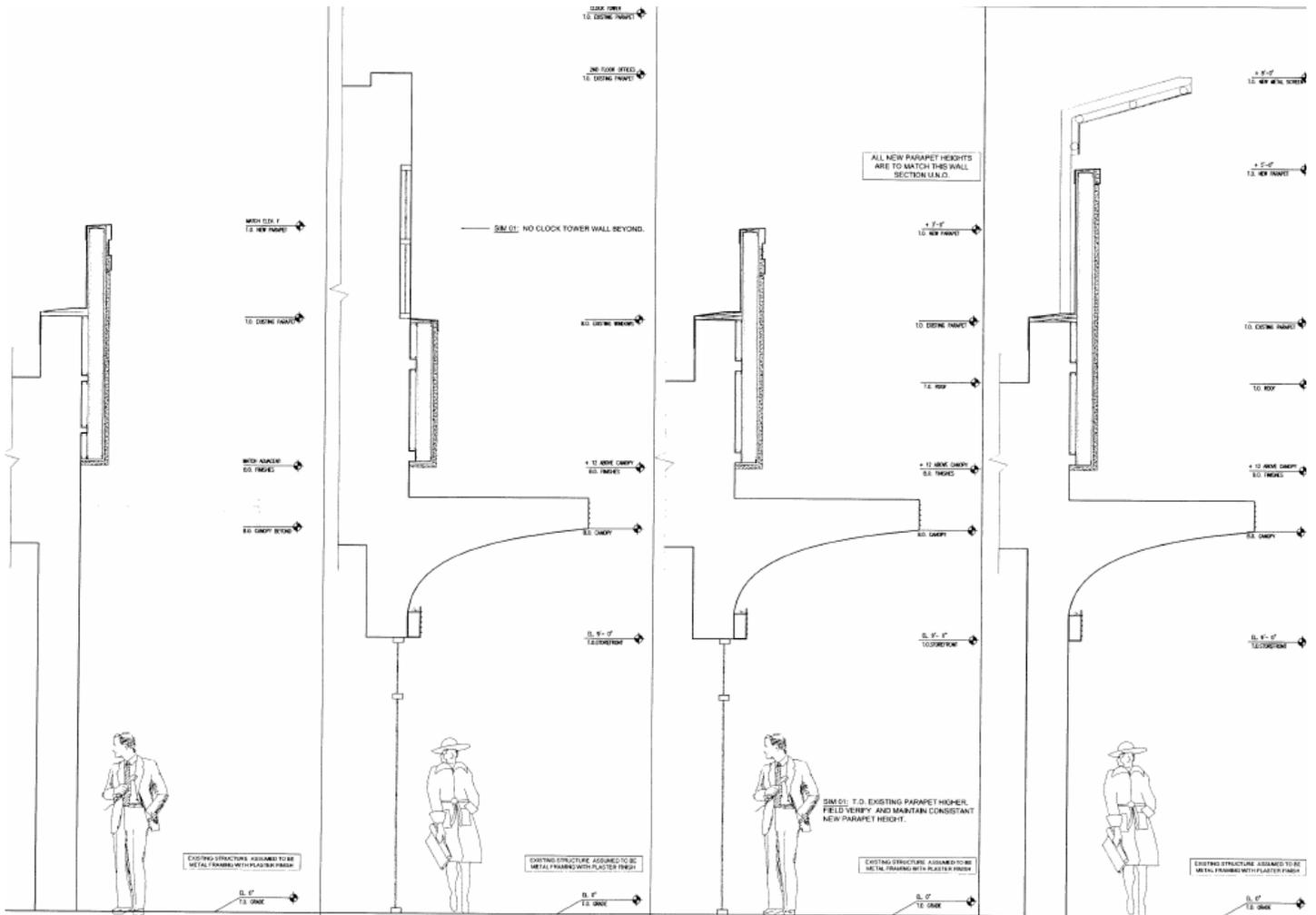


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Cross Sections  
Showing Proposed Raised Parapet Wall  
Not to Scale



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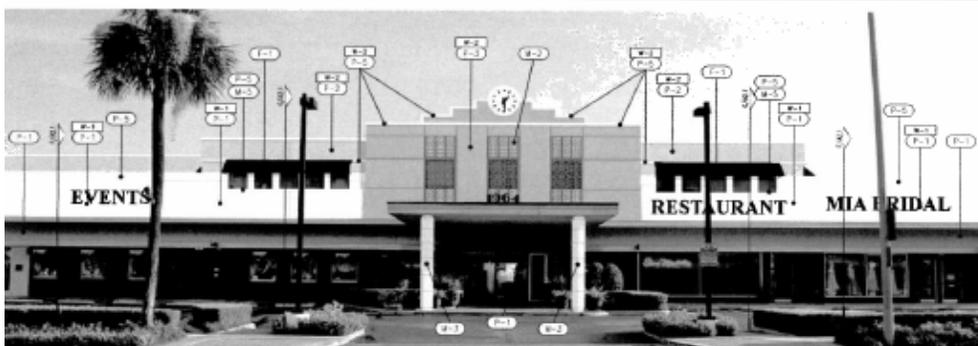
Zone 3 Existing & Proposed Elevations



3 EXISTING SOUTH ELEVATION  
SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0" (1/4" = 1'-0")



3 EXISTING SOUTH ELEVATION  
SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0" (1/4" = 1'-0")



OPTION A - DETAIL AT OFFICE WINDOWS 2 PROPOSED SOUTH ELEVATION  
SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0" (1/4" = 1'-0")

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**Zone 3 Existing & Proposed Elevations**



**3 EXISTING SOUTH ELEVATION**  
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"



**PROPOSED SOUTH ELEVATION**

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**Zone 3 Existing & Proposed Elevations**



**9 EXISTING SOUTHWEST CORNER ELEVATION**  
SCALE: N.T.S. (APPROX. 1/8" = 1'-0")



**8 PROPOSED SOUTHWEST CORNER ELEVATION**  
SCALE: N.T.S. (APPROX. 1/8" = 1'-0")

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**Zone 4 Existing & Proposed Elevations**



**3 EXISTING NORTH ELEVATION**  
SCALE: N.T.S. (APPROX. 1/8" = 1'-0")



**2 PROPOSED NORTH ELEVATION**  
SCALE: N.T.S. (APPROX. 1/8" = 1'-0")

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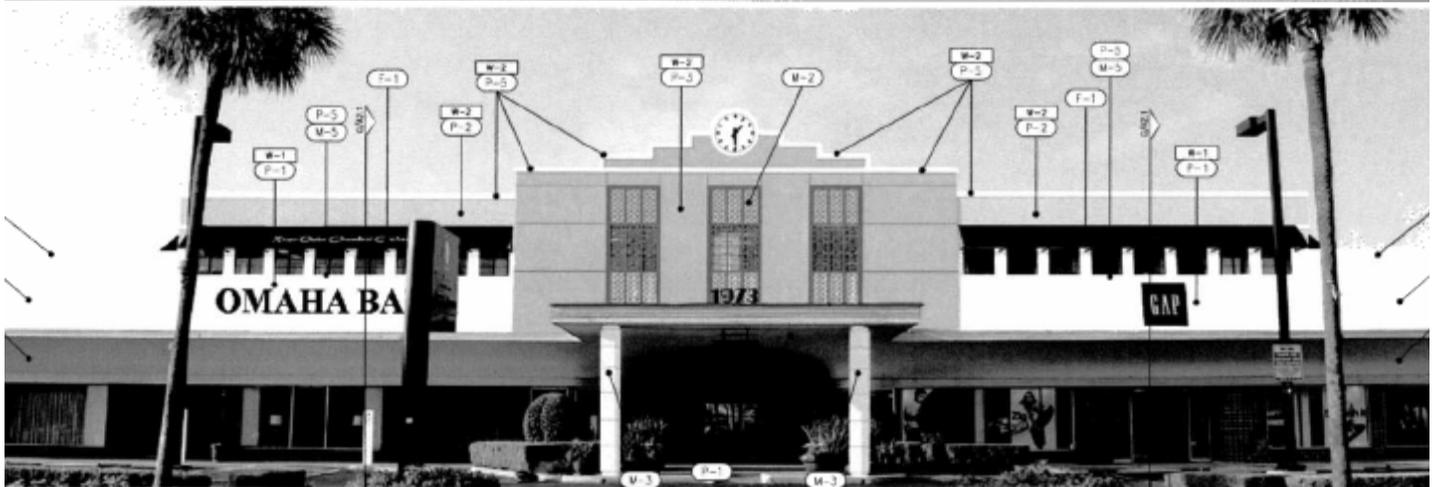
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Zone 4 Existing & Proposed Elevations



3 EXISTING NORTH ELEVATION  
SCALE: N.T.S. (APPROX. 1/8" = 1'-0")



OPTION B - PARAPET AT OFFICE WINDOWS PROPOSED NORTH ELEVATION

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**Zone 4 Existing & Proposed Elevations**



**3 EXISTING NORTH ELEVATION**  
SCALE: N.T.S. (APPROX. 1/8" = 1'-0")



**2 PROPOSED NORTH ELEVATION**  
SCALE: N.T.S. (APPROX. 1/8" = 1'-0")

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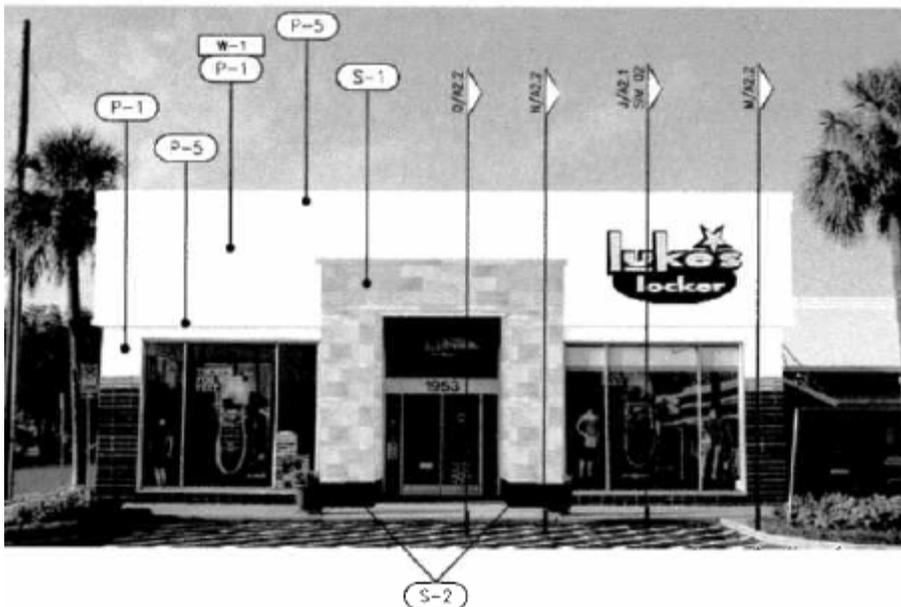
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**Zone 4 Existing & Proposed Elevations**



**12 EXISTING LUKE'S NORTH ELEVATION**  
SCALE: N.T.S. (APPROX. 1/8" = 1'-0")



**PROPOSED LUKE'S NORTH ELEVATION**

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Zone 5 Existing & Proposed Elevations



3 EXISTING NORTH ELEVATION  
SCALE: N.T.S. (APPROX. 1/8" = 1'-0")



2 PROPOSED NORTH ELEVATION  
SCALE: N.T.S. (APPROX. 1/8" = 1'-0")

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**Zone 5 Existing & Proposed Elevations**



**3 EXISTING NORTH ELEVATION**  
SCALE: N.T.S. (APPROX. 1/8" = 1'-0")



**2 PROPOSED NORTH ELEVATION**  
SCALE: N.T.S. (APPROX. 1/8" = 1'-0")

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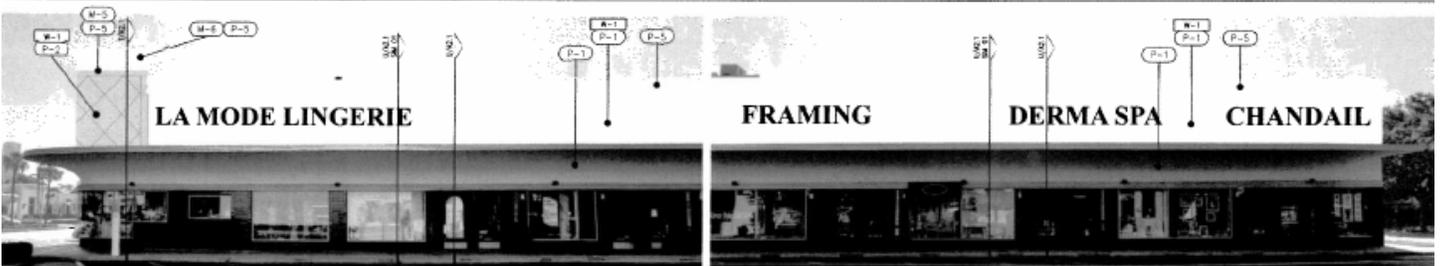
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Zone 5 Existing & Proposed Elevations



3 EXISTING EAST ELEVATION  
SCALE: N.T.S. (APPROX. 1/8" = 1'-0")



2 PROPOSED EAST ELEVATION  
SCALE: N.T.S. (APPROX. 1/8" = 1'-0")

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**Zone 6 Existing & Proposed Elevations**



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**Zone 6 Existing & Proposed Elevations**



1 EXISTING CURVED WEST ELEVATION



2 PROPOSED CURVED WEST ELEVATION  
SCALE: N.T.S. (APPROX. 1/8" = 1'-0")

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**Zone 6 Existing & Proposed Elevations**

**Existing**



**Proposed**



**Existing**



**Proposed**



**CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATNESS**